

Volume 28, No. 1
Winter 2012

Upcoming Events

Mardi Gras
Sunday, February 19

Annual Meeting
Saturday, March 31

**Second Saturday
at the Society Lectures**

Saturdays
January 14
February 11
April 14
from 10:30 a.m. to noon
at the Society

**Board of Directors
Monthly Meetings**

January 9
February 27
March 26
April 23

All meetings are held on
the fourth Monday
of each month at 7 p.m.
at the Society,
1447 W. Morse, and are
open to all members.

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The Historian

Preserving & Promoting Neighborhood History

Rogers Park and West Ridge featured in openhousechicago

by Bob Fuller

A visit to the inner sanctum of a monastery, a special tour of an Asian grocery store, a rare peek at the inside of two Frank Lloyd Wright homes on Sheridan Road—these are just three of the locations in Rogers Park and West Ridge that were open to those who attended openhouseChicago. The Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society served as the lead community partner in staging the city's newest marquee cultural event held on the weekend of October 15-16, 2011.

The Society, working with the Chicago Architecture Foundation, selected the participating sites, recruited volunteers and provided logistical support for implementing openhouseChicago in Rogers Park and West Ridge. More than 4,000 people visited the 21 locations throughout our far north side neighborhood. Ours was one of the five participating communities in the city.



The Casa Bonita was one of the many north side venues featured this year. (Photo courtesy of Chicago Architecture Foundation)

Visitors to Rogers Park and West Ridge had unprecedented access to a variety of community treasures, from the lakefront west to Indian Boundary Park, and including sites in the Glenwood Arts District and along Ridge Boulevard. By the numbers, with more than 2,500 visitors, Frank Lloyd Wright's Emil Bach House and the
see OHC, page 5

Plan to attend our Annual Meeting, March 31

Saturday, March 31, 2012, is the date set for our Annual Meeting and Election of Board of Directors. As in 2011, the meeting will be held at the Greenleaf Art Center, 1806 W. Greenleaf Ave. Since this is the fifth Saturday of the month, we've rescheduled our Second Saturday lecture to coincide with the Annual Meeting.

We will cover highlights of significant Society accomplishments in 2011 and update you on our 2012 plans, including the firehouse, events, etc. We will have a volunteer recognition segment in the meeting. Also, there will be a presentation on our oral history partnership with New Field School and a demonstration of the program.

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Historical Society**

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2011–2012**

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The Historian

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Hank Morris

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Mark your calendars!

Mardi Gras

The Society will celebrate Mardi Gras with a very special fundraising brunch. Alderman Joe Moore and his wife Barbara have very graciously offered to personally host this event at their beautiful, 100 year old home in Rogers Park! The brunch will take place on Sunday, February 19, 2012, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and will feature delicious, New Orleans cuisine. In addition, there will be a cooking demonstration, music and much more. Cost is \$40 for members, \$30 for members who are students and senior citizens, and \$60 for nonmembers. More details will follow soon.

West Ridge Gangster Walk

On May 6, the Society will hold its second Gangster Walk in West Ridge.

Few people know that over the years our LOVELY, peaceful neighborhood has been the setting for some of the city's most horrendous murders as well as home to some of Chicago's most notorious crime figures. In the 1920s and 1930s, West Ridge was the

stomping ground of North Side crime boss George "Bugs" Moran, Al Capone's main rival for control of the city's rackets.

Second Saturdays

Second Saturday at the Society is a monthly lecture series held at the Society's offices from 10:30 a.m. to noon on the second Saturday of each month.

We have just completed our first year in this ongoing series. Jonathan Dixon has recruited many seasoned lecturers who have spoken on topics such as the Angel Guardian Orphanage, historical events, the research features and services of the Chicago Public Library's website, the history of the Chicago "L," the Luxembourgers in Rogers Park and West Ridge, and many others.

The 2012 series promises to showcase many more interesting topics in our lecture series. Also, please remember that an exciting and interactive discussion follows each lecture. The series is free of charge to our members. We ask for a small donation of \$5.00 from nonmembers.

Arthur C. Nielsen, Jr. (1919–2011)

It is with great sadness that we report that Society Life Member, Arthur C. Nielsen, Jr. passed away at age 92 on October 6, 2011, from Alzheimers-related complications.

According to a letter to Mary Jo Doyle on July 14, 1992, from Art Nielsen, "Rogers Park was very good to the Nielsen Company. My wife and I lived there from 1945 to 1948 in an apartment on Estes Avenue in the Indian Boundary Park area. I have many happy memories of the time spent there."

The A.C. Nielsen Company was founded by his father, Arthur C. Nielsen in 1923. The first office was in the Harris Trust & Savings Bank on Monroe Street in downtown Chicago. It moved to offices on Ravenswood in the Dartnell building, right next to the railway station and moved again to 2101 W. Howard Street. It remained there until 1972, when it moved to Northbrook. A.C. Nielsen became the world's largest research organization, eventually employing 28,000 full-time people in 27 countries.

During his tenure as president and chairman of Nielsen. Art's passion and tireless commitment to helping industries better serve consumers led to the creation of many innovations we all rely on today, including consumer and performance surveys, market share data, the department and food index, and television ratings, to name a few.

The Society has lost a good friend.



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From the President's Desk

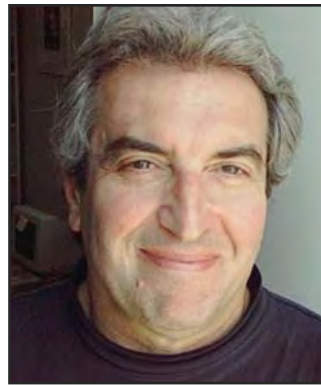
by Paul Bluestone

As I write this, it has been exactly one year since we picked ourselves up and moved from 7344 Western to 1447 Morse. A cold wind howled and blew snow in our door on 12/12/10. Two hundred chilled members, volunteers, and new visitors huddled sardine-like in our tiny quarters to mark the historic occasion (and to get warm!). We weathered that storm and have welcomed nearly 2,000 visitors since.

In the spirit of new beginnings, we launched a new lecture series called *Second Saturdays* which transforms our museum space once each month into a small auditorium and brings specialists in to speak on a wide range of subjects like the history of the Chicago El, tracking down the history of your house, the story of the Angel Guardian Orphanage, Luxembourgers in Rogers Park, and Indian food and culture in our own neighborhood. The audience is always interested, the programs are enlightening, and the questions, conversation and shared memories flow freely. It's a great new program which was the brainchild of Jonathan Dixon, our past president, who continues to keep it interesting month after month. We have a full calendar of Second Saturdays in store for you next year, along with a *Gangsta Tour*, a fundraiser at Alderman Moore's house, our Annual Meeting on March 31st, a House Tour in the historic Deer Park in West Ridge, a Calvary Cemetery tour and openhousechicago in October.

In pursuit of our mission to make history relevant to new audiences, we've found a partner in the New Field School and its extraordinary Principal, Susan Kilbane. Together, we are developing a pilot program for the gifted second and third grade classes in which children will be making history by videotaping their parents and grandparents talking about their own family histories. We will also be working together with a team of teachers from the school on a plan to incorporate Rogers Park history into the third grade Chicago history curriculum.

This year's collaboration with the Chicago Architecture Foundation on



openhousechicago was a big success. With the help of our own Bob Fuller, we recruited over 200 volunteers to work 21 sites in our two neighborhoods on October 15th and 16th. Rogers Park and West Ridge had the best turnout of all Chicago neighborhoods with over 7000 site visits including 300 to our Historical Society alone. We are now in discussions with the CAF about expanding the project in 2012.

We continue to work on improving our website, History Wiki, *Cabbagehead*, and this newsletter and have built our electronic image archive to approach 5000 images. And Rob Case is leading the Society's collaboration with *Historypin*, an international, historical, electronic image bank project based in London.

And thanks to all of you who took the time to complete the survey we sent out in the last issue. We will take your responses to heart as we plan for 2012 and beyond.

To cap off our planned activities for 2012, we have our sights set on the abandoned Engine 102 Firehouse at 1723 W. Greenleaf. We are in the application process with the city as I write this, with Bob Fuller taking on additional responsibilities as a Project Assistant for the Society for the acquisition phase of the project. It's too early to be sure, but if all goes well we will be the owners of a 1915 firehouse in 2012. You will certainly hear more about this.

Thank you all for continuing to support the Society with your interest, your time and your financial generosity. We couldn't do it all without you.

Paul

Membership as of December 1, 2011

Welcome New Members!

Individual

Dana Des Jardins
Paula Barker Duffy
Kristina Eason
Elizabeth Patterson
Yakov Pekar
Carolyn Quinn
Debra Simon
Amy Windler

Family

Paul Dolan Family
Bob Fuller & Audra Lewicki
Bob & Judy Kucera
Scott Lavick Family
Jeanette Pierce Family
Larry Shure & Angela Forfia
Tom Simonds & Holly Graff
Howard & Sue Trudeau
(Cupertino CA)

Senior Family

Kevin & Naomi Atoji-Walker
Dennis & Sylvia Hart
Richard & Barbara
(Moskowitz) Marsh

Thanks for Renewing!

Individual

David Gerber
Judith Gramer
Joseph Hollenkamp
Ellie Kalish
Sharon Kozak
Vicki Kruzal
Dorothy Metzler
Donald Nyderek
Glen Timmerman
Ahadi White

(continued on next page)

(continued from previous page)
Thanks for Renewing!

Family

- Jim Brusek & June Macchiaverna and Jana Brusek
- Nick Dorochoff & Joe Beason
- Dan & Carolyn Goffman
- Michael & Angela Morrow
- Joe & Peggy Penkrot
- James Redlich & Myra Epping
- Dan & Cathy Schwegel

Senior / Student

- Helen Carlock
- Lauren Crawford
- Judge Ronald Davis
- Judith Flapan
- Joe Gutstadt
- Bridget Hapner
- Betty Hill Hopkins
- Barbara Isaacson
- James Kepler
- Rita McClure Koehler
- Patricia Meegan
- Doug Nelson
- Bette Raef
- William Redlich
- Anne Schaefer
- Diane Willett
- Jerome Yanoff

Senior Family

- Bill & Tiana Benway
- David & Audile Fortman
- Bill & Marge Johnson
- Franklin & Catherine King
- Stanley Morrison Family
- Ed & Pamela Rappaport
- Herb Zeigeldorf & Carol Westerlund

Sustaining

- Chris Boebel & Glenna Eaves
- David Levinson & Kathy Kirn

The Greenhouses of West Ridge

by Hank Morris

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, West Ridge was primarily farmland. Farmers working the fields raised crops like beans, peas, melons, cabbage, squash, cucumbers, corn, and other vegetables. They took their crops, first on horse-drawn wagons and later on trucks, to the vegetable markets in Chicago. They made a modest living.

Then, greenhouses made their way to the country's Midwest and the farmers noted that growing and selling flowers was much more lucrative than growing and selling vegetables. Not far away were Calvary Cemetery and St. Henry's Cemetery—and there would be mourners visiting the

cemeteries who would be in the market for fresh flowers to lay at a loved one's grave. How convenient it would be, the farmers thought, if the mourners could simply stop somewhere along the way and purchase their flowers. And unlike vegetables, flowers could even be grown all year long in a steam-heated greenhouse!

In the long run, it was the fact that raising flowers in a greenhouse year round made a farmer a lot more money than raising vegetables did during one short season a year. This is what drove these hardy Luxembourgers and Germans to switch from veggies to flowers



Above right, the Nepper Family Greenhouse at 4633 Murphy Avenue (RPWRHS Photo B005-0103) and at left, the Nepper Greenhouse in 1907. (RPWRHS Photo N001-4418)

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Our photo archives have over 40 photos of these greenhouses, both inside and outside. Here are some examples.

I've always been interested in greenhouses as my home is built on the site of one. Maybe yours is too. H.M.



Rear view of the Thillens greenhouse at 2136 West Peterson Avenue, with the heating plant chimney at right. (RPWRHS Photo T016-0001)



Welter Greenhouse at California and Fargo Avenues in 1905. (RPWRHS Photo E002-4315)

OHC, from page 1

Cat's Cradle Bed & Breakfast at Sheridan and Fargo were the most popular sites. Heavy visitor traffic was also seen at the apartments in Casa Bonita, Park Gables, and Park Castle.

Although residential buildings were the crowd favorite, openhouseChicago visitors took advantage of personal tours of local businesses run by such personalities as co-owner Michael James of the Heartland Cafe and Susan Patel of Patel Brothers. Visitors were allowed backstage at the Lifeline Theatre and were also allowed to see Uncommon Ground's organic rooftop garden. Additionally, over 300 people visited the Society's headquarters at 1447 W. Morse Ave.

The diverse nature of our two neighborhoods was well represented by the variety of locations chosen for the event. The people throughout the community, through all their hard work became willing contributors to its success.

Of the five participating communities, only the Loop had more visitors than Rogers Park and West Ridge. Citywide 30,000 people made visits to the 100+ openhouseChicago locations. By all measures the event was a success in capturing sites that illustrated how unique each Chicago neighborhood is to our city and a reminder that Chicago is a town rich in cultural, historical and environmental treasures.

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Ben the Barber—A West Ridge Success Story

by Nancy Jane Lauren

Based on an article that appeared in the RP2000 newsletter in 2009

Sixty years ago the local barbershop was alive and well. So was the corner drugstore, the Ed Sullivan Show and the *Saturday Evening Post*—an endearing portrait of America in the postwar years. Back in those days, West Ridge was still mostly prairie, but not for long. Shops began dotting a stretch of Touhy near California; a butcher shop here, a grocer there, a toy store, a restaurant and, of course, an old-fashioned barbershop. New homes were built and young families with children moved in. Soon their backyards would be filled with swing sets, sandboxes and inflatable wading pools. By the mid-60s those same kids would be asking for the car keys and thinking ahead to college.

The days became years and the years dissolved into decades. When time passes, it always leaves behind a trail of change, for better or for worse and some things inevitably disappear along the way. Gone today is the corner drugstore. Gone are Sunday nights with Ed Sullivan and gone are the local barbers. Except for Ben. At 91, Ben Scheinkopf is still cutting hair five days a week at Ben's Barbershop in West Ridge. He has witnessed the evolution of a neighborhood over the past 60 years, all from the corner of Touhy and California.

Ben began his new life in Chicago in December of 1949 when he left Germany for America. Like many others from Eastern Europe, he went searching for opportunity and a better life. After only 3 days he had a job at Sid's Barbershop, on Touhy, just west of California. In 1949, haircuts were \$1 and shaves were 50 cents. The community was growing and Ben

was busy giving haircuts and shaves from morning till night. The 60s brought Beatle mania, long hair and ultimately a decline in business. Eventually Sid's Barbershop downsized to a smaller space around the corner and when Sid died, the shop was renamed Ben's Barbershop.

In the earlier years, a guy's routine usually included a haircut every two weeks – an opportunity for barber and client to develop a friendship. Ben's Barbershop became one of those wonderful old-time establishments where people stopped by sometimes just to talk. Some customers have been going to Ben for 50 years. Others are so loyal that they continue to have Ben cut their hair even though they've moved away to places such as Waukegan and Buffalo Grove. And then there is a special group of clients – those who were just little boys when Ben first cut their hair. Today those "little boys" have grandsons of their own who also have Ben cut their hair. A marvel. Three generations in one family – grandfather, father and son. Ben often gets the question "So, was my grandfather a good boy?"

When Ben tells me this, I envision a little boy dwarfed by a barber's chair. There he sits in my imagination with his little feet dangling over the edge of the seat, far above the floor, too big a jump to make a run for it and escape his first haircut. Then Ben pumps the chair up even higher so he doesn't have to bend down when he's giving the haircut and he can tell the kid is afraid. Ben knows how to fix this. He tells the little guy that he has nothing to be afraid of. He's done this many times and he hasn't lost a



Ben exchanges stories with Greg Brewer as he cuts Greg's hair in his shop at California and Touhy. (Photo: NancyJane Lauren)

customer yet; not even a little one. Ben is face to face with his little customer and brushes the hair out of his eyes. The bangs are the first to go. Now he can see where he's going!

Three generations! How often does something like this happen? I marvel at Ben. I think of how many guys sat in that chair over the years and all the stories he's told and the friends he's made.

And even now, after all these years, Ben's Barbershop still offers the same kind of camaraderie not easily found in grooming salons today. This place is much more than the sum of its parts, but then Ben is an extraordinary sort. He always sees his glass as half-full. And his strength has been tested by the worst conditions imaginable. Ben spent three years in Auschwitz during World War II and lived through all the horrors of the Holocaust. His life was spared because of his trade. The camp needed a barber to give haircuts to the other prisoners. Sadly, 7 of Ben's 8 siblings were not as fortunate. Of the 6,000 Jews who lived in his hometown of Plonsk, Poland, only 30 survived.

When the war ended, Ben was hired as a barber by the United States soldiers who were stationed at an army base in Germany (haircuts were 35 cents back then). The army gave him a place to stay, fed him, gave him clothing, and for the next four years he was welcomed into their group like family. "Good years," Ben says. This is also where he learned to speak English. Then in 1949, he got word that his number was up to come to America; the soldiers were very sorry to see him go.

Ben dwells more on the wonderful life he has created here than he does on his experiences in Auschwitz. He has a wife and three grown sons, a

livelihood, his health, and a loyal following. He does feel that all future generations should be aware of the Holocaust and the years that preceded it. They need to remember that once, when a ruler tyrannized an entire nation, millions of innocent people died. When all the survivors are gone, there will be no one left to tell it.

Ben's Barbershop is located at 7204 N. California in West Ridge. His phone is 773-465-1669. He's there cutting hair Tuesday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Even if you don't need a haircut, you may want to stop by just for the conversation.



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Thanks to our openhouseChicago Volunteers!

by Bob Fuller

We would like to thank the 170+ volunteers who made openhouseChicago possible. They include Society members and nonmembers as well. This event would not have been possible without all their hours upon hours of hard work. So, to all of our openhouseChicago volunteers, you have the Society's heartfelt appreciation and a very big Thank You!

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Society's Survey Drawing Winners Announced!

Almost 100 people responded to our survey during October, and of those, eighty-five respondents were eligible to enter the drawing. On Saturday, November 12 five winning names were pulled. Here they are with the prizes they won:

First Prize, Teresa Earp: Gift Certificate for Art Class or Graphic Design Services provided by the Greenleaf Art Center

Second Prize, Mary Pat McKenna: \$50 certificate for a meal at Act One Pub and two tickets for an event at the Mayne Stage

Third Prize, Bonnie Richardson: Two Tickets for a night of theater at Lifeline Theatre

Fourth Prize, Laurie White and Raymond DeGroot: Choice of a complimentary individual or family membership, or a copy of one of the Society's award-winning books

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Streetcar Safety Islands

by Hank Morris

Anyone remember when Chicago had streetcars and streetcar safety islands?

Because streetcars ran on tracks, they could not pull over to the curb to board and discharge passengers. Only busses can be so accommodating. Since standing in the street waiting for a streetcar was a fairly dangerous proposition, streetcar safety zones, also known as streetcar safety islands, were established. Streetcars would pick up and discharge passengers only at these locations.

A streetcar safety zone is described as “the area or space officially set apart within a roadway for the exclusive use of pedestrians and protected or so marked by adequate signs or



People wait in a streetcar safety zone for the southbound Chicago Surface Line’s 49 Western Route at Devon Avenue in 1929. (RPWRHS Photo R044-8001)

authorized pavement markings as to be plainly visible at all times.”

Many state laws specified that car and truck drivers were prohibited from passing a streetcar that was boarding or discharging passengers unless a designated safety zone was present.

The Chicago solution was to have a large, heavy, cast concrete block painted yellow at the traffic flow end of the safety zone. It had a yellow pole with two alternately flashing amber lights, the left one high and the right one low.

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Member Category	Dues
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$25
<input type="checkbox"/> Household	\$40
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior/Student	\$20
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior/Student Household	\$30
<input type="checkbox"/> Premium	\$50
<i>Household Membership benefits plus a complimentary “Birches” coffee mug.</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$100
<i>Household Membership benefits plus 2 free tickets to a Society special event.</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Life	\$500
<input type="checkbox"/> Business	\$100

New and Renewing Members

Please check the appropriate category box for your renewal or new membership.

The Society has revised its membership dues and benefits starting 1/1/2012. These changes, which were supported by the responses to our recent survey, will help support the Society’s programs and services to the community in the coming years.

Thank you for your continued support!

*Mail your check to RPWR Historical Society, 1447 W. Morse Ave., Chicago, IL 60626
 To pay by credit card, please call us at 773-764-4078 or use our Web site: www.rpwrhs.org.*

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

- New Membership Renewal
 I would like to volunteer at the Society.

The Rogers Park / West Ridge Historical Society Store

Your purchases help to support the Society's mission. We have a wide selection of books and other merchandise available for sale at the museum. Below are three of our more popular items.

You may order these items by phone, mail, in our store, or from our website. Please note, for orders in Illinois, we must charge 9.75% sales tax. For orders to be shipped, please include \$6 shipping and handling per delivery address.

Brushed Stainless Steel Travel Mug

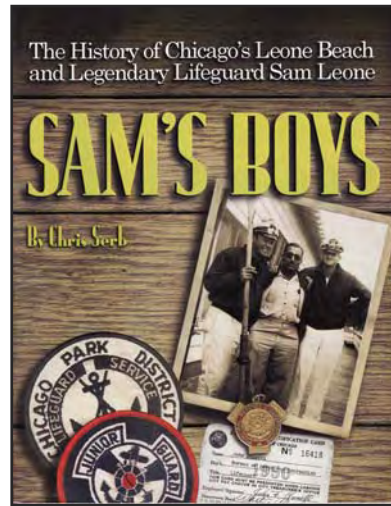
This 12 oz. travel mug has insulated grips and is sports the Society's logo.

Nonmembers: \$14.00 + \$1.36 tax
Members: \$11.25 + \$1.10 tax



Sam's Boys: The History of Chicago's Leone Beach...

Nonmembers: \$20.00 + \$1.95 tax
Members: \$16.50 + \$1.61 tax



Ceramic "Birches" Coffee Mug.

This black ceramic mug bears a 1900 image of a birch forest that stood at Ashland and Lunt.

Nonmembers: \$4.00 + \$0.39 tax
Members: \$3.25 + \$0.32 tax



QTY	ITEM	PRICE	IL Tax (9.75%)	Total
Shipping (\$6.00 per address)				
Grand Total				

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____ E-mail _____

Credit Card Type: MC Visa Discover AmEx

Credit Card Number: _____ Back: _____ Expiration: _____

Signature: _____

The success of our popular Second Saturday events means we need folding chairs!

If you would like to donate up to 20 chairs or cash for the purchase of chairs, contact us at 773-764-4078 or rpwrhs@aol.com.



**Been in the "hood" a while?
Know somebody who has?**

The Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society is conducting an ongoing oral history project. We're collecting the memories of those individuals who remember what life was like in Rogers Park and West Ridge "way back when."

Oral histories are a wonderful way to learn about our neighborhoods before all the complexities of "modern life" settled in.

Memories are precious. Whether they're yours, a friend's or a relative's. Help preserve our community's past through oral history today.

You can reach Nancy Jane Lauren to arrange an interview at: 773-338-5365 or nancyjanel Lauren@sbcglobal.net

Do you have old photos of Rogers Park or West Ridge?

The Society is charged with the preservation of our photo collection. In it, we have literally thousands of photographs that have been donated to the Society to be preserved for future generations and today's researchers.

It's one of our most valuable resources. Why not add your old photos to our collection? We will scan them and put them in the Photo Archives. Future generations and today's researchers will thank you for your efforts.

We can scan slides, negatives, prints, whatever. While we would prefer to preserve the originals, we're not greedy. If you want them back, we will honor your request.

It would be most helpful if you could provide notes as to what is being shown in the photographs. We've never met Aunt Martha. Please tell us who is who. Neighborhoods change. Please tell us where the photo was taken and when.

For more information, contact the Society's offices.

Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society
1447 West Morse Avenue, Chicago, IL 60626
Phone: 773-764-4078 or e-mail us at rpwrhs@aol.com.

Do You Know?

What do you know about this house?
Send your solution to rpwrhs@aol.com.
The first person that correctly identifies the house gets a copy of one of our two Society-published books.



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1447 West Morse Avenue
Chicago, IL 60626

773-764-4078
<http://www.rpwrhs.org>
rpwrhs@aol.com
Open daily 2 pm - 7 pm
Other times by appointment



To reduce our carbon footprint, we can send you this newsletter electronically instead of in print.



To participate, send an e-mail to rpwrhs@aol.com with the subject line "Green."

Mark Your Calendars!
Second Saturdays at the Society, 10:30 a.m.
Annual Meeting,
March 31, 2012